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Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. This report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/173, of 14 December 2000, on assistance to the Palestinian people, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its fifty-sixth session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the resolution. The present report covers the period from June 2000 to May 2001.

2. A separate report, prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/56/90-E/2001/17), has been submitted to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council. It should be noted that information concerning the living conditions of the Palestinian people is also provided in periodic reports prepared by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator (UNSCO).

3. In September 1999, the Secretary-General reconfigured the mandate of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, whose title was changed to United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. In addition to his responsibilities relating to the occupied Palestinian territory, the Special Coordinator was given responsibilities for coordinating United Nations assistance related to the peace process in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Throughout the period under review, the Special Coordinator has maintained his efforts to fulfil the mandate of his office, including ensuring effective coordination between the relevant institutions of the Palestinian Authority, United Nations and the international community, as well as documenting economic and social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory. He has also provided periodic analyses on these matters and special reports on specific issues.

4. During the reporting period, the realities and priorities in the occupied Palestinian territory have shifted significantly due to the current crisis, which began on 28 September 2000. Starting from that date, intensive violence has occurred throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and in Israel, resulting in the deaths of several hundred Palestinians, the wounding of tens of thousands of Palestinians and the deaths of over one hundred Israelis. Both in terms of loss of life and in terms of its impact on the peace process, this period constitutes the deepest crisis in the Middle East since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993.

5. Apart from loss of life and injuries, the current crisis has been characterized by severe internal and external closures of both the West Bank and Gaza. This has resulted in large-scale losses to the Palestinian economy, wiping out more than three years of prior growth. The impact of the closures is monitored by the Special Coordinator and reported on periodically. According to the latest report of the Special Coordinator, the Palestinian economy has likely experienced over 50 per cent income losses, while unemployment has at least tripled. The impact on the livelihoods of the Palestinian people has been devastating.

6. The principal challenge for the United Nations system in the period preceding the current crisis was the attempt to underpin peace talks and efforts to advance the political process with programmes and projects leading to long-term sustainable development. Within the current context, characterized by violent conflict, the United Nations has placed new emphasis on emergency humanitarian interventions, coordinated through a Humanitarian Task Force on Emergency Needs. Additionally, there is a pressing need for rehabilitation of the Palestinian economy and institutions, even while conflict continues. Addressing the current economic and social needs of the Palestinian people is a necessary step towards restoring support for the peace process, which has dropped in tandem with living conditions.

7. The present report provides an analysis both of United Nations development assistance to the Palestinian people in the period before the outbreak of the conflict and of the measures taken to address the new emergency situation. Emphasis is placed on the quick and effective response of the United Nations system in shifting from a development focus to emergency humanitarian assistance.

II. Development assistance (June-September 2000)

8. Following the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in 1993, the occupied Palestinian territory became one of the largest recipients of development assistance in the world, in per capita terms, a fact which facilitated progress in its development. This assistance is coordinated through the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee and the Local Aid Coordination Committee, to which the United Nations family of agencies is represented by the Special Coordinator, who serves as co-chair of the Local Aid Coordination Committee.

9. The scale of donor assistance reflected their commitment to supporting the peace process and the efforts of the parties to reach a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. To date, pledges amounting to a total of $5.760 million have been made, compared to $5.724 million in 1999. The United Nations presence in the occupied Palestinian territory also reflected this commitment, increasing from three organizations in 1993 to 12 in 2000. In addition, many other organizations of the United Nations system have provided technical assistance and expertise to the Palestinian Authority over the years. In December 2000, the Office of the Special Coordinator issued a summary report on the sixth annual inter-agency meeting held in June 2000. The report presented a framework for cooperation between the resident and non-resident United Nations agencies and the Palestinian Authority. It also reflected sector-specific priorities and an integrated approach to development initiatives by the United Nations system.

10. This section of the report will address the development-oriented activities of the United Nations system during the period from June to September 2000. It presents activities in terms of sectors, along the same sectoral distinctions found in the Palestinian Development Plan of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

A. Infrastructure and natural resource management

11. Infrastructure and related services underpin development in all sectors and almost half of the total budget of the Palestinian Development Plan was dedicated to this sector. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) were each involved in projects designed to improve sewerage, drainage and water supply systems in different regions of the West Bank and Gaza, guaranteeing a clean water supply to thousands of residents. UNRWA also continued its peace implementation programme, an initiative launched in 1993, which now includes 243 current or future projects oriented towards infrastructure and improvement of employment and socio-economic conditions. UNDP utilized over $27 million to complete several major infrastructure projects, including the rehabilitation of 70 clinics and primary health care centres in remote areas throughout the West Bank and the restoration of water supply distribution networks to Jericho and Hebron. UNDP worked closely with the donor community and the Ministry of Justice in order to finalize the designs for a new courthouse in Nablus. In addition, UNDP launched a project for the construction of the south wing of the Gaza International Airport. Its technical assistance and infrastructure support to local administration was also expanded. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is currently implementing a project of technical assistance (total budget: $232,000) to the Palestinian Authority for the establishment of a maritime administration. IMO is also, at the request of UNDP, assisting the Palestinian Authority in securing the funds necessary for the construction of the Gaza seaport. A children's library in Bethlehem is currently being established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at the cost of $303,000, through the restoration of a traditional building in the old city. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is in the process of preparing a report on the environmental situation in the West Bank and Gaza.

B. Institutional capacity-building

12. This sector has been of central importance as the Palestinian Authority is responsible for the public sector, which serves approximately three million people. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) provided a range of training courses, documentation and materials for Palestinian Police Force commanders, officers and

trainers, as well as for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). OHCHR also provided technical and financial assistance to various Palestinian organizations to allow them to conduct legal research and workshops. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) facilitated technical assistance and funding, for the purpose of a census, to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. UNESCO developed phase II of its project entitled "Capacity-building and training on environmental planning and management". UNDP is supporting the Palestinian gateway project, implemented by the World Bank, which will improve access of the public and private sectors to information and communication technologies. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with a budget of $188,000, provided assistance to the Palestinian Authority in the form of expert services, training and equipment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) assisted the Ministry of Labour and employers' and workers' organizations in capacity-building and establishing a national strategy for the protection of workers from occupational hazards (total budget $30,000). UNEP provided support to representatives of the Palestinian Authority allowing them to participate in one global ministerial meeting and nine regional expert meetings covering various issues surrounding environment and natural resource management. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided considerable training for the carrying out of a health survey in 2000. It has also strengthened the district-level capacity of the Ministry of Education to monitor the five-year education plan.

C. Human resources and social development

13. ***Education***: UNRWA was the largest United Nations contributor in the education sector, with a programme budget of $75.5 million. It is in charge of 263 agency-run elementary and preparatory schools, accommodating 233,172 pupils in the 2000/2001 school year. The Agency's four vocational and technical training centres provided post-elementary and post-secondary programmes to 2,036 trainees. In addition to regular in-service training programmes for education staff, the educational sciences faculty at the Ramallah training centres offered pre-service training leading to a first university degree for 600 trainees. Merit-based scholarships were awarded to 253 Palestinian refugee students for study at universities in the region. UNICEF was active in this sector through the implementation of its basic education programme, which included two projects: "Quality, equity and relevance of primary education", and "Community education for young children, adolescents and youth". UNESCO provided a range of technical assistance to the Ministry of Education, including in the areas of inclusive education, pre-school teaching and joint preparation of the "Manual for School Construction". The "Palestinian school-net project", supported by UNDP, will connect thousands of students to the vast educational resources available on the Internet.

14. ***Health***: UNRWA, with a budget of $25.3 million for 2000, operated 51 health facilities in order to provide comprehensive primary health care. These facilities handled 3.3 million patient visits. Rehabilitation services were provided through 13 physiotherapy clinics, while six maternity units, integrated within the Agency's health centres in Gaza, provided intra-partum care to women. Secondary care was made available to refugee patients through a combination of contractual agreements with non-governmental and private hospitals and partial reimbursement of treatment costs and directly at the Agency's 43-bed Qalquilia hospital in the West Bank. The 238-bed European Gaza Hospital, a joint project between UNRWA, the European Union and the Palestinian Authority, became fully operational in October 2000 and was handed over to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. WHO continued to implement a variety of activities through its "Special Technical Assistance Programme". UNICEF implemented its health and nutrition programme. The project activities included immunization campaigns and training in immunization management and monitoring. Under the school health promotion subproject, all children entering Grade 1 (55,000 a year) receive physical and developmental screening and screening for other grades in Gaza and oral health screening in the West Bank has also been accomplished. In cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs, UNICEF also provided training to nursery teachers in 12 districts in psychosocial health, first aid and evacuation. During the reporting period, UNFPA continued to implement its programmes in reproductive health. These included strengthening the technical and human resource capabilities for policy, planning and service delivery. The Fund worked in collaboration with UNICEF, WHO, the Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to complete a health survey

for 2000. Data from this report was published and made available in January 2001. A significant development in the UNICEF health and nutrition project was the first local production of iodized salt. This was achieved in cooperation with the Ministries of Health, Supplies, Trade and Industry.

15. ***Social welfare***: UNRWA's special hardship programme provided direct material and financial assistance to 101,893 refugees to cover food, shelter and other basic needs. The Agency sponsored 25 women's programme centres, 20 community rehabilitation and 26 youth activity centres as well as a rehabilitation centre for the visually impaired in Gaza, through which targeted social services were provided. The World Food Programme (WFP) concentrated its development activities on poverty alleviation and social relief interventions. These included the "Protracted relief and recovery operation", which began in June 2000, for the alleviation of the effects of the economic crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory on the most vulnerable groups of the Palestinian non-refugee population, covering more than 100,000 people. This operation also targets additional 4,000 beneficiaries through eight selected NGO-operated institutions for the handicapped and orphaned or abandoned children. UNDP's ongoing efforts to alleviate poverty were marked in the reporting period by the initiation of the "Palestinian participatory poverty assessment". The project will provide the methodological instruments necessary for the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation to implement the poverty alleviation programme, also supported by UNDP.

16. ***Human rights***: A joint UNDP/OHCHR task force facilitated micro-grants to five Palestinian NGOs under OHCHR's "assisting communities together project", enabling them to carry out community activities focusing on human rights. In order to continue its work for the development of child-focused legislation and policy, UNICEF implemented its "advocacy and capacity building programme". UNDP, through the United Nations Volunteers programme, provided an international lawyer to support and assist with these projects. In preparation for the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children, UNICEF and UNFPA provided technical and financial assistance to the comprehensive multi-indicator cluster survey in order to update data on the situation of children and women. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in introducing parallel education as a preventative strategy against child labour. Several training workshops on the Convention on the Rights of the Child were held for teachers and social workers. UNICEF also provided technical and financial assistance for the drafting of the first Palestinian child rights charter, which is to be finalized and submitted to the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2001. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), through its women's human rights programme, provided support to initiatives from Palestinian NGOs on violence against women.

17. ***Women***: UNIFEM continued to implement its post-Beijing follow-up operation phase II project. The focus of this project is on institution capacity-building, gender mainstreaming and formulation of action plan strategies via the national women's machineries. During the reporting period, the project activities aimed at building the capacity of the inter-ministerial commission for the advancement of women, the General Union of Palestinian Women and the NGO network to implement their mandate according to the Beijing Platform for Action. UNRWA promotes credit to women through its solidarity group lending programme, which provides loans solely to women-owned microenterprises. This is a programme that, in addition to being targeted at women, is also largely staffed by women, as the Agency feels this holistic approach is the best way to secure women's economic participation in the economy of the West Bank and Gaza. During 2000, this programme provided 3,900 loans to women on an individual and group guarantee basis. These loans were valued at $2.98 million. UNDP placed a team of two international and eight national specialists from the United Nations Volunteers to supervise the "choose a future" project, which was designed to empower young women from underprivileged areas. During the course of the project, 150 schoolgirls and 14 teachers received a range of training that combined gender awareness and empowerment with high-tech training in video and computer skills.

D. Productive sectors

18. The productive sectors include industry, tourism, agriculture and income-generating activities, to a large extent involving the private sector. UNDP is involved

in activities supporting rural and economic development, environmental protection and agricultural production. These include a project to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, water harvesting and the reclamation of degraded rangelands. One such project involves the cleaning of Wadi Gaza, at a cost of $3.5 million, and turning it into a nature reserve. UNESCO has been involved in several initiatives designed to safeguard cultural heritage. These have included the second phase of a project for the conservation of the Qasr Hisham Palace and its mosaics ($198,000) and the provision of equipment for protecting the archaeological site of Jericho, as well as training seminars. UNDP and the United Nations Volunteers programme assisted in these projects, through the provision of an international architect and a national cultural heritage specialist. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) continued its integrated support programme for Palestinian industry. During the reporting period, this programme has included creating and training a team of experts from the Ministry of Industry and the Palestinian Federation of Industries in the identification, assessment and selection of pilot-enterprises for industrial upgrading. An agreement was reached with the Palestinian Authority for establishing an industrial investment promotion unit within the Ministry of Industry. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has developed 10 technical assistance projects covering various aspects of commercial diplomacy, enterprise development, sustainable development and other issues surrounding trade and finance. The outbreak of the current crisis forced suspension of all of these project activities, some of which were resumed in a limited fashion in early 2001. UNRWA continued to operate its microfinance and microenterprise programme, aimed at creating job opportunities and alleviating poverty by making credit available to small businesses and micro-enterprises through revolving loan funds. UNIFEM, as part of its economic empowerment project for the development of women's entrepreneurship in the Gaza Strip, conducted a series of workshops entitled "business awareness" and "start your own business", targeting low-income and unemployed women. ILO supported vocational training through the implementation of a number of projects, including the establishment of the Sheikh Khalifa vocational rehabilitation centre and the Palestinian employment programme.

III. Evolution of the crisis and reorientation of United Nations efforts

A. Impact of the crisis on the economic situation

19. The period since October 2000 is marked by the most severe and sustained crisis in Israeli-Palestinian relations since the signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993. Confrontations have resulted in the deaths of several hundred Palestinians, the wounding of tens of thousands of Palestinians and the deaths of over one hundred Israelis. There has also been significant damage of Palestinian infrastructure, buildings, agricultural lands and property and vehicles. In addition to unprecedented levels of confrontation, the period has been characterized by the most severe movement restrictions (also known as "closure") ever imposed on the occupied Palestinian territory by Israel. This closure seals off Palestinian towns and villages from each other, as well as from Israel. The closures have generated severe economic and humanitarian hardships. An updated report issued by UNSCO on 31 March 2001 concerning the social and economic impact of the continuing conflict and closure policy estimated the relative decline in the Palestinian gross domestic product (GDP) to be 51 per cent since the closure period. This amounts to a decline in output of over $1,341 million during the first 185 days of the crisis. Among other things, the closure has resulted in the severe loss of employment opportunities for Palestinian workers in Israel. By the end of March, the border with Israel had been closed on 74 per cent of all working days, resulting in 13.4 million working days lost and labour income losses of over $350.2 million. It was estimated that in March 2001, there were 297,000 unemployed workers in the occupied Palestinian territory, amounting to 26.1 per cent of the work force, and that the median monthly income of households had decreased by 48 per cent since the beginning of the crisis. At the end of 2000, the World Bank estimated that 32 per cent of the Palestinian population was living in poverty, a 50 per cent increase since the onset of the crisis, and that the poverty rate would rise to above 40 per cent by the end of 2001.

20. This collapse in living conditions has generated a corresponding collapse in public support for the peace process. The United Nations, both through the Special

Coordinator and through the United Nations agencies and programmes, has sought to respond in political and socio-economic terms both to meet the current needs and to create conditions for the resumption of Palestinian development and the peace process, leading to a just solution and economic well-being for the Palestinians.

B. Humanitarian Task Force for Emergency Needs

21. In response to the outbreak of the conflict and the resulting urgent humanitarian situation, I requested the Special Coordinator to set up a Humanitarian Task Force to coordinate the response of donors and the United Nations system to emergency health needs resulting from the crisis. Chaired by UNSCO, the Humanitarian Task Force for Emergency Needs was established on 3 October 2000, in close cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Health. The Task Force comprises representatives from the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations system, the donor community, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and key international NGOs. Its aim was to establish coordination mechanisms for meeting the urgent health needs emerging from the crisis by identifying immediate priorities, mobilizing aid and facilitating movement and delivery of assistance. In the period October to December 2000, the Task Force helped mobilize over $12 million in emergency assistance.

22. As the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate, the Task Force underlined the urgency of extending assistance beyond the ongoing medical emergency to include items such as food, water and shelter to vulnerable populations, especially to those deprived of their means of livelihood. Thus, during its first several weeks of work, the Task Force helped identify key sectors requiring strategies for emergency response, including establishing priorities for additional funding. Those strategies were consequently developed and tightened through existing or ad hoc sector working groups for presentation to the wider donor community. UNSCO, as chair of the Task Force, collected information on donor contributions for emergency needs and circulated the information to all members of the international community currently providing assistance to the Palestinian people.

23. With the realization of the long-term nature of the crisis and the continuation of the external and internal closure policy imposed on the occupied Palestinian territory, it became very clear that humanitarian access, broadly meaning freedom and security of movement of people and goods required for humanitarian activities, is the central challenge in responding to the emergency. At my request, UNRWA took the lead in the Task Force's efforts to address the issue of humanitarian access. It was agreed that the Task Force would concentrate its efforts on developing and promoting the access strategies and initiatives of its various members. The objective of this reorientation was to develop concrete proposals for strengthening efforts to gain reliable and secure access to affected populations for humanitarian needs. Key elements of these efforts include enhanced monitoring of impediments to access, legal support, coordinated political interventions with authorities, media strategies and coordination of efforts to implore among key affected parties. On 20 April 2001, given the continued restrictions by Israeli authorities of humanitarian movement, the Special Coordinator and the Commissioner-General of UNRWA met the Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs to discuss issues related to humanitarian access. The Minister assured them that it was the policy of the Government of Israel to facilitate the work of the United Nations and humanitarian workers in general.

24. At the request of UNSCO, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs became involved in the region shortly after the outbreak of the conflict. Following a needs assessment mission in October 2000, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is supporting enhanced and strengthened capacities for planning and response to humanitarian needs through a variety of ongoing actions, including the secondment of an emergency support planner and the provision of two Humanitarian Affairs Officers to UNSCO to monitor and assess the humanitarian and socio-economic condition in specific locations.

25. The Task Force endorsed initiatives to activate key existing sector working groups to develop plans for addressing priority humanitarian needs. The key sectors identified were health, education, water and energy. In addition, ad hoc sector working groups were formed for job creation and food/social assistance, which are considered to be central areas to an effective emergency response. Sector working groups bring

together all key players needed to develop emergency strategies.

C. Fiscal crisis faced by the Palestinian Authority and donor response

26. The economic impact of several months of political crisis has taken a severe toll on the fiscal health of the Palestinian Authority, dramatically reducing its capacity to offer essential goods and services and weakening Palestinian governing institutions. An estimated 50 per cent drop in GDP has translated into a 50 per cent reduction in potential tax revenue, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other sources. This amount has been further reduced by the fact that approximately two thirds of the revenue of the Palestinian Authority is dependent upon transfer of taxes collected by the Government of Israel, as agreed under the Paris Protocol on Economic Relations of 1994, and that no revenue has been transferred since 20 December 2000.

27. In late January 2001, out of deepening concern for the social and political impact of this reduced budgetary capacity, the Special Coordinator and the other co-chairs of the Local Aid Coordination Committee (the World Bank and the Government of Norway) launched a joint initiative, in partnership with IMF, to raise awareness of and to mobilize financial support to offset the increasingly acute fiscal crisis of the Authority. To date, the donor community has responded with generosity to redress this situation. The European Union was among the first to mobilize support, through extension of a €57.5 million loan in late 2000, and a commitment to extend a further €60 million as a grant in spring 2001. High levels of bilateral support were also provided by Saudi Arabia ($40 million), the United Arab Emirates ($15 million) and Norway ($10 million). Furthermore, significant assistance was pledged in early 2001 by the League of Arab States, working through the Islamic Development Bank, to extend a soft loan of $240 million over six months to the Palestinian Authority. The combination of domestically collected revenues, donor assistance and extensions of credit has been critical in ensuring that the Palestinian Authority can continue to provide essential social services such as health care, education and social relief, as well as pay salaries for public employees. Even with such generous assistance, however, the Authority has been forced to operate on a shoestring, given the overall decline in tax revenues and the continued lack of tax revenues that have been collected by Israel but not transferred to the Authority.

IV. Assessment of humanitarian assistance (September 2000-May 2001)

28. As stated above, the priorities and needs in the occupied Palestinian territory changed abruptly with the outbreak of the crisis. Development-oriented initiatives became extremely difficult to implement in the context of violence and lack of freedom of movement while, at the same time, the immediate needs on the ground called for a rapid response. For this reason, all United Nations organizations and the specialized agencies with operating capacities to do so reacted immediately to the emergency through the implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes designed to meet the urgent requirements of the Palestinian people, who found every aspect of their lives disrupted.

A. Social sectors

29. ***Education***: Many Palestinian children and youth have seen their schooling disrupted by systematic restrictions on movement imposed by Israel and are now unable to reach their schools on a regular basis. As a result, UNICEF has been supporting, through the Ministry of Education and NGOs, alternative education projects in areas under closure. UNICEF's support of a community-based education programme in Hebron, involving approximately 200 teachers, has allowed 12,000 children, whose education was disrupted due to the closure and curfew, to continue learning the Palestinian curriculum. In Khan Younis, 50 injured children, aged 10 to 15, were provided with supportive education to compensate for their absence from school in addition to psychosocial support for them and their families. UNRWA launched a flash appeal and two emergency appeals to fund its programme of assistance for refugees. With funds derived from these appeals, the Agency has been implementing a compensatory education programme for youth and children whose schooling has been suspended or disrupted due to closure. As of March 2001, 2,252 children had benefited from supplemental education courses in

English and mathematics, and an additional 480 children from computer skills courses.

30. ***Health***: The current emergency situation has substantially increased demands for curative medical services and has caused a serious breakdown of preventive services, including immunization, maternal and child health care and family services. Systematic closure severely hampers the movement of patients, medical personnel and medical supplies. As a result, the sick and injured are often unable to gain access to the care to which they are entitled and there have been noticeable increases in rates of home deliveries, premature deliveries and stillbirths. The health system is facing the enormous challenge of the additional care for thousands of individuals physically and psychologically wounded during the crisis, in which access to treatment is severely curtailed by the persistent restriction on movement.

31. In response to the crisis, WHO assumed a leadership role in advocacy and coordination of health resources deployed in the territory. It set up and coordinated the field task force on health in the West Bank and prepared and launched an urgent international humanitarian appeal for assistance to the Palestinian population, requesting approximately $7.5 million. The organization continues to carry out an ongoing assessment of the health status of the Palestinian population and has provided four traumatological kits. Upon the outbreak of the crisis, UNDP added a new dimension of emergency humanitarian assistance to its ongoing development activities. Due to its skill in rapid-response implementation of emergency projects, UNDP mobilized and disbursed funds from a variety of donor Governments, of which approximately $1.3 million was designated for emergency support to the health sector.

32. As part of the programme of emergency humanitarian assistance, UNRWA acted quickly to meet the medical needs of the refugee community arising from the crisis. The Agency's interventions in the health sector included the establishment and deployment of mobile medical teams. By 31 March 2001, the Agency had provided 1,600 physiotherapy sessions to refugees who had sustained acute injuries in the conflict and had lent some 450 wheelchairs to mobility-impaired patients undergoing physiotherapy. UNICEF worked in several areas to improve the health-care situation under closure, concentrating on emergency assistance, first aid and the safe delivery of newborns. It also provided logistic and technical support to the Ministry of Health for polio vaccination campaigns in remote areas of the West Bank strongly affected by the closures. This resulted in the immunization of 5,904 children under five. The second round of the campaign is currently under way. UNICEF has provided approximately 2,500 first aid kits to schools, nurseries, kindergartens and youth centres. In addition, training in first aid was carried out for teachers in 400 schools in the areas most affected by the crisis and for 396 youth in Gaza City and Rafah.

33. UNFPA's programme of assistance was rapidly adjusted to address the needs engendered by the crisis, especially in regard to reproductive health supplies and commodities. UNFPA allocated emergency funds for the procurement of reproductive health commodities, including contraceptives, essential drugs and selected equipment, as supplies had been nearly exhausted due to the closure. In addition, core budgetary resources under UNFPA's project of assistance to the Ministry of Health were made available to cover emergency requirements.

34. It is estimated that 1.3 million Palestinian children are suffering or will suffer from negative psychological effects of the continuing crisis. Mental health problems resulting from ongoing psychological distress are often long-term in particular for children. Early intervention and ongoing support is crucial in the effort to alleviate immediate effects and prevent long-term psychological problems. For this reason, UNICEF dedicated the largest share of its emergency assistance to psychosocial counselling interventions with children. These interventions covered a range of priority areas, including assistance in setting up crisis intervention teams and counselling hotlines run by expert NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza.

35. ***Social welfare***: Due to the economic blockade imposed by the closure, signs of economic stress are evident everywhere in the occupied Palestinian territory, poverty rates are on the rise and families are increasingly seeking support from welfare and charitable institutions. United Nations agencies have reacted to these urgencies through various welfare projects and income-generation initiatives. In October 2000, in an emergency operation, WFP provided urgent food assistance in the Gaza Strip to 65,000 non-refugee beneficiaries from the special hardship cases category who were not included under other social welfare

programmes. In November, a second emergency operation was approved, at a cost of approximately $3.9 million, to provide food assistance to 257,500 persons for three months. UNRWA undertook to distribute food to some 217,500 families through its relief and social services programme. Beneficiary families met a range of criteria identifying them as living below the poverty line owing to the economic crisis brought on by the closure of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNRWA has also extended assistance to families whose shelters have been demolished or damaged.

36. ***Human rights***: While the human rights situation has always been very precarious in the occupied Palestinian territory, the recent upsurge of violence and restrictions has intensified the level and occurrence of human rights violations. From 8 to 16 November 2000, at the urgent request of the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited the occupied Palestinian territory, as well as Israel, Egypt and Jordan. Her report was issued as document E/CN.4/2001/114. On 19 October, at its fifth special session, the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolution S-5/1 establishing an international commission of inquiry to investigate violations of human rights and humanitarian law occurring after 28 September 2000 in the occupied Palestinian territory. In February 2001, a three-member inquiry commission visited the occupied Palestinian territory. The Israeli Government refused to cooperate with this commission. In March 2001, a report of the commission was submitted to the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2001/121).

37. Since the beginning of the current crisis, UNICEF has advocated the rights of Palestinian children at all levels. It has engaged in documenting the situation of Palestinian children and has assisted the international media in reporting accurately on this situation. A press conference was organized on 24 March 2001 to launch "Palestinian children's month", calling for the protection of all Palestinian children's rights. UNIFEM has reacted to the conflict through carrying out research, awareness-raising, capacity-building and advocacy on the impact of the current conflict on Palestinian women and children.

38. ***Women***: UNIFEM efforts during the crisis have focused on building the capacity of national institutions to handle the situation and its effects. The UNIFEM post-Beijing project facilitated the work of the emergency committees established by the general union of Palestinian women, focusing on information and media related to relief efforts, as well as advocacy and awareness campaigns. With the support of UNDP, the project is facilitating the development of emergency plans for the national women's machineries in an attempt to focus on areas of priority. In all of the above sectors, and others, UNDP has placed a total of 42 national United Nations Volunteers in order to improve the human resource capabilities of local organizations during the crisis.

B. Productive sectors

39. As part of its emergency humanitarian programme, UNDP designated a majority proportion of funds mobilized from a variety of donor Governments for emergency employment-generation projects designed to tackle the disastrous economic consequences of income and job losses due to restrictions on worker movements. In January 2001, UNRWA established an employment-generation programme in Gaza and the West Bank to create short-term employment for refugees who lost their jobs due to the closure and economic crisis. These temporary employees are restoring essential purchasing power to their families. They are also augmenting UNRWA's emergency assistance programme. The employees include medical staff, teachers, social workers, food distribution labourers, civil engineers, and other labourers, all of whom are collectively engaged in building tangible assets for the benefit of the community. These assets include expansion and repair of refugee camp infrastructure and renovation of agency schools and health clinics.

40. In the area of agriculture, in 2001, WFP began implementing a quick action project to support agricultural development activities with the Ministry of Agriculture and local and international NGOs as partners. This project involves rehabilitating existing terraces, building new terraces, improving soil quality and constructing cisterns. The project also serves to involve women in training activities, by providing food aid as an incentive. Approximately 3,700 poor farmers and 2,200 women are targeted by the project during its one-year duration at a cost of approximately $2.7 million.

41. ILO established a task force to prepare project proposals in response to the current crisis. In March 2001, a mission was undertaken to assess priority needs. Partners endorsed proposals concerning employment creation and income generation, vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons, vocational training and capacity-building of social partners in response to the crisis. ILO is in the process of launching, with its own resources, some of these activities and is seeking extrabudgetary resources in order to consolidate its actions.

42. As of October 2000, UNIDO's overall implementation plan was revised to cope with the crisis. The remote support by UNIDO staff and experts was increased as compared with fieldwork. As the demand for upgrading Palestinian enterprises is very high even under the present circumstances, it was decided to continue capacity-building activities by holding training courses originally planned for the West Bank and Gaza in other locations. These courses, organized for industrialists, staff of the Ministry of Industry and the Federation of Palestinian Industries, technical experts and private consultancy companies, have been or will be held in Bahrain, Jordan and Egypt.

V. Unmet needs and proposals for effective response

43. By virtue of its long-term presence on the ground, the United Nations system has been able, in collaboration with local authorities and communities, to identify priorities for future action in the occupied Palestinian territory. The underlying approach aims at the adoption of a two-track strategy. On the one hand, it responds to the emergency needs and priorities posed by the current crisis and, on the other, it aims at the continuation of a development-oriented approach that could be put into place if the current crisis is resolved or, where possible, implemented concurrently in order to prevent a further erosion of previous developmental achievements. UNDP provides a broad overview of intersectoral priority needs, identified in terms of several sectors in which short-term assistance can alleviate the immense hardships with which the Palestinian people are currently faced, until long-term solutions are found. According to UNDP, the areas of the highest priority for emergency assistance in the West Bank and Gaza are employment generation, support to the health sector, restoration of municipal and social infrastructure and agricultural restoration and rehabilitation.

A. Human resources and social development

44. ***Education***: UNICEF has identified a range of priority needs of children and is currently seeking to expand the services put into place in response to the crisis. Due to the fact that there are still at least 37 schools in the occupied Palestinian territory that have not re-opened since September and that more schools may be in a similar situation depending on the day-to-day evolution of the situation UNICEF considers the development of educational alternatives to be a priority need. In order to respond to this need, it seeks to build upon its existing project in Hebron, as well as including the development of self-learning packets; development of radio and television support programmes; set up of learning centres and other related activities. In schools that are operating, the priority is to make the schools a more protective environment through further training of teachers in psychosocial interventions, first aid and evacuation and self-help and life-skills. UNESCO has highlighted from the bombardment of various schools and institutions, including the Khadury Technical College in Tulkarem, has caused damage amounting to millions of dollars. In addition, the organization draws attention to the major disruptions at universities largely owing to high teacher and student absenteeism caused by restrictions on the movement of persons.

45. ***Health***: UNFPA emphasizes the fact that the emergency provision of health supplies is not sufficient to cover the needs of the Palestinian population, especially as regards access to care. UNFPA, in collaboration with WHO, has launched an emergency appeal to cover three areas to be addressed within the framework of the UNFPA emergency assistance. The first is the need to develop a logistics system for reproductive health supplies and other commodities. Secondly, there has been an increase in obstetric complications and possible maternal mortality and morbidity as a result of the closure and siege on towns and cities. Thirdly, UNFPA recommends that a large-scale survey of the impact of the closure on reproductive health be carried out. WHO puts forward a range of priority needs in the health system which should be implemented immediately owing to the

prevailing emergency conditions. These include the continuous assessment of the health situation and the response capacity and access to health facilities by both patients and health workers as a public health priority. UNICEF stresses the necessity of the provision of emergency health supplies and equipment for the primary health care system. This would provide crucial support to the strategy of the Ministry of Health, which involves strengthening the primary health-care level so that additional emergency interventions can be performed in areas affected by closures that prevent the population from reaching hospitals. UNICEF also emphasizes the importance of the development of mid-term and long-term psychosocial interventions, given the situation of chronic stress and widespread psychological vulnerabilities.

B. Social welfare

46. WFP points to a variety of urgent issues in provision of food aid. The very weak response of donors to the WFP emergency appeal considerably delayed the procurement and delivery of commodities for their second emergency operation. Until April 2001, only 50 per cent of the resources needed to implement this operation had been confirmed. Similar difficulties arose in implementation of WFP's long-term food aid project. Due to resource constraints, a break in distribution occurred from June to September 2000. The subsequent arrival of WFP food allowed distributions to resume in October 2000. However, only 71 per cent of the resources needed to implement this project was covered by donors. WFP emphasizes the fact that delays in the supply of food to the Palestinian population could lead to deterioration in the health and nutrition status of the vulnerable groups and the at-risk categories. A prolongation of the crisis may result in a continued demand for emergency assistance to the current target groups, with the likelihood that their number could well increase. The continuing crisis and closure have significantly hampered the movement of goods, which, coupled with additional security measures, have complicated the logistics arrangements for commodity distributions and increased logistics costs.

47. ***Human rights/women***: UNIFEM, echoes the priority needs indicated by the national women's structures. Of primary importance is the need to ensure that the humanitarian assistance that is being offered is gender-sensitive and takes into account the situation and needs of women. Before the crisis, 73 per cent of female-headed households suffered from deep poverty. Since the crisis, preliminary analyses show that the number of Palestinian households in deep poverty has increased, with an even sharper increase for those households maintained by women. There is, therefore, an urgent need for strategies and interventions that address the feminization of poverty. UNIFEM points to the need for further research on the impact of the current crisis on women and children and on raising women's involvement in peace-building.

48. ***Youth***: UNICEF is striving to continue to provide peaceful opportunities for the youth given that, for a variety of reasons, adolescents aged 12 to 18 years often bear the brunt of the present crisis. The organization of summer activities will be a key strategy to provide safe recreational and non-formal activities for Palestinian youth. UNICEF supported the adoption of a Palestinian declaration on summer camps on 30 April 2001. Availability of funding will be crucial to expand the number of such activities this summer. The United Nations Volunteers programme stresses the need, in all of the above sectors, for an enabling mechanism to facilitate the utilization of volunteer skills and ethos in the current crisis situation. The programme thus advocates the adoption of a strategic intervention to further support and encourage the spirit of volunteerism.

C. Productive sectors

49. As indicated above, ILO carried out a mission in March 2001 to assess priority needs and the relevance of ILO project proposals which had been prepared in response to the current crisis. The following priority areas were identified: employment creation and income generation through a multi-component support programme at the community level; vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons and youth with special needs; vocation training; combating child labour; employment mapping and capacity-building of local partners in response to the crisis. The organization is currently seeking the funds necessary for the implementation of projects in those areas. UNIDO stresses the fact that the current situation has dramatically affected the industrial sector. At present, the industrial sector is able to produce between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of its average output, which is

having a striking effect on the Palestinian economy. The main factors affecting industry include: lack of availability of raw material and industrial inputs; no possibility to export; no sub-contracting arrangements; sporadic or unavailable electric power; limited or no transportation or movement of goods and workers; breakdown of opportunities for investment and partnerships; no possibility for attracting funds and technical cooperation; and physical destruction of industrial assets and infrastructure. All of these areas should be addressed urgently. Furthermore, Palestinian representatives of the public and private sectors expressed the need for continuing UNIDO support in several areas falling under various categories of industrial upgrading and investment promotion. UNCTAD calls attention to the urgent needs that have been created in the trade sector by the economic crisis. In response to a request of the Minister of Economy and Trade of the Palestinian Authority, UNCTAD initiated a joint effort with the World Trade Organization (WTO) to respond to pressing technical assistance needs posed by the crisis. An appeal has already been launched to a number of bilateral and multilateral donors to contribute to implementation of a package of urgent technical assistance to enhance Palestinian regional integration and cooperation and assist the Palestinian external trade sector in addressing new policy challenges.

VI. Conclusions

50. In view of the ongoing crisis in Israeli-Palestinian relations, the period under review has been the most difficult and challenging since the United Nations began intensive development assistance to the occupied Palestinian territory in 1993. In fact, the previous achievements of facilitating international aid to the Palestinian people have been seriously threatened. At the same time, the sudden outbreak of the crisis has tested the ability of the United Nations system to respond appropriately and effectively to urgent priority humanitarian needs. A United Nations emergency coordination mechanism, the Humanitarian Task Force for Emergency Needs, was established within days of the outbreak of the conflict. This Task Force, initially envisaged to focus on health needs, was extended to address other priority sectors as soon as the need became evident. Emergency assistance received has greatly contributed to meeting some of the immediate requirements. However, much work needs to be done to reduce and repair the extensive negative effects of the crisis on the Palestinian economy and society.

51. In my diplomatic efforts, and through those of the Special Coordinator, I continue to press for a resumption of the peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and to stress the importance of an immediate effort to restore viability to the Palestinian economy and institutions. I have argued that it is not possible to restore security and stability without a resumption of political activity leading towards a just settlement and of economic activity leading to an improvement of living conditions. A first step in this regard is the full implementation of the report of the Fact Finding Committee established under the auspices of the United States President and in coordination with myself at the Sharm el Sheikh Summit in October 2000.

52. What seemed initially to be a short-term emergency, warranting limited humanitarian aid, has developed into a protracted conflict necessitating more sustained United Nations action that continues to address emergency needs while at the same time sowing the seeds for future development. By continuing to respond to the ever-changing crisis situation and simultaneously aiming to ensure that previous developmental gains are not eroded and are furthered wherever possible, the United Nations is endeavouring to meet the needs in the occupied Palestinian territory in the most comprehensive manner possible. It will be necessary for the United Nations system to strengthen and fine-tune existing coordination mechanisms, to eliminate potential duplication and to ensure responsiveness to needs identified by the beneficiaries.

53. The various United Nations organizations and the specialized agencies must continue to reconfigure their work so as to strike the optimal balance between relief and development. It is clear that there is a heightened need for increased activities and services provided by the United Nations and other organizations in the occupied Palestinian territory. I call upon the international community to provide the necessary resources for the assistance programmes for the Palestinian people. I would draw particular attention to the latest emergency appeal from UNRWA, which provides vital services to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

54. The dramatic deterioration of the economic and the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory highlights the urgent need to find a peaceful solution of the ongoing crisis. I, therefore, strongly urge the parties to end the current cycle of violence and to resume a meaningful political process on the basis of United Nations resolutions, leading to lasting peace and reconciliation.